

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 (currently amended). A slitting saw used to cut an opening in a pipe comprising:

- a) a housing;
- b) a cutting blade apparatus; and
- c) a drive assembly enclosed in the housing for rotating said cutting blade apparatus, the drive assembly including a gear train including a series of shafts including a drive shaft, and idler shaft, and a cutter shaft each of said shafts being journaled in bearings for rotation in said housing wherein the cutting blade is operatively coupled to the cutter shaft, said drive assembly further including a drive motor for rotating the gear train.

2 (currently amended). The slitting saw in claim 1 wherein the gear train includes:

- a) a first and a second bevel gear wherein the first bevel gear rotates on a horizontal an axis perpendicular to an axis of the drive shaft and the second bevel gear rotates on ~~a vertical axis, the vertical~~ the axis provided by of the drive shaft, wherein rotation of the first bevel gear transfers rotational motion to the drive shaft;
- b) a first helical gear mounted on the drive shaft and coupled in driving relation to a second helical gear mounted on the idler shaft wherein the first and second gears mesh so as to impart rotation to the idler shaft; and
- c) a third helical gear is mounted on the idler shaft and a fourth helical gear is mounted on the cutter shaft and meshing with the third helical gear so as to transfer rotational motion from the idler shaft to the cutter shaft.

3 (currently amended). The slitting saw in claim 2 wherein:

- a) the drive shaft has one threaded end and is journaled for rotation in said housing by a first and second bearings where the first and second bearings are mounted proximate opposite ends the drive shaft;
- b) a first spacer is mounted on the drive shaft between the first bearing and the first helical gear;
- c) a second spacer is mounted on the drive shaft between the second bevel gear and the first helical gear second bearing; and
- d) the second bearing is held on the drive shaft by a washer and a nut screwed onto the one threaded end.

4 (currently amended). The slitting saw in claim 2 wherein:

- a) the idler shaft is journaled for rotation by a third and fourth ~~Timken~~ wear adjustable bearing where the third ~~Timken~~ bearing is mounted at the base of the idler shaft and the fourth ~~Timken~~ bearing is mounted on the top of the idler shaft;
- b) a spacer is mounted between the top of the third helical gear and the fourth ~~Timken~~ bearing so that the fourth ~~Timken~~ bearing is properly aligned; and
- c) the fourth ~~Timken~~ bearing is fastened on the idler shaft by a washer and nut.

5 (currently amended). The slitting saw in claim 2 wherein:

- a) the cutter shaft is journaled for rotation by a fifth and sixth ~~Timken~~ wear adjustable bearing where the fifth ~~Timken~~ bearing is mounted ~~beneath~~ adjacent the fourth helical gear;
- b) a spacer is placed between the ~~top of the~~ fourth helical gear and the sixth ~~Timken~~ bearing so as to align the ~~sixth Timken bearing~~ third helical gear and fourth ~~Timken bearing~~ helical gear; and
- c) the sixth ~~Timken~~ bearing is fastened to the cutter shaft by a nut and washer.

6 (currently amended). The ~~splitting~~ slitting saw in claim 1 ~~5~~ wherein the housing enclosing the drive assembly includes

a) a bottom cover plate on which the drive shaft, idler shaft, and cutter shaft rest;

b) a gearbox case secured to the bottom cover plate for housing the first, second, third and fourth helical gears and the ~~horizontal-axis~~ first bevel gear;

c) a bearing case affixed to the gearbox case for containing the fourth and ~~fifth Timken~~ sixth wear adjustable bearings;

d) a bevel gear case affixed to the gear box case for housing the ~~vertical-axis~~ second bevel gear, and second bearing Timken gear.

7 (currently amended). The ~~splitting~~ slitting saw in claim 6 wherein the bottom cover plate includes two annular ~~resources~~ recesses for receiving a bottom portion of the drive shaft and a bottom portion of the idler shaft.

8 (currently amended). The ~~splitting~~ slitting saw in claim 7 wherein the bottom cover plate further includes an annular aperture for receiving the bottom portion of the cutter shaft therethrough.

9 (currently amended). The ~~splitting~~ slitting saw in claim 7 wherein the cutting apparatus includes:

a) ~~a single lip seal;~~

b) ~~an annular collar with a central annular aperture for receiving the cutter shaft~~ therethrough;

eb) a cutting blade; and

dc) a lock nut for securing the cutting blade to the ~~annular~~ collar.

10 (canceled).

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11 (canceled).

12 (canceled).

13 (canceled).

14 (currently amended). The ~~splitting~~ slitting saw in claim 1 wherein the drive motor is selected from a group consisting of an electrically powered motor, a pneumatically powered motor and a hydraulically powered motor.

15 (canceled).

16 (canceled).